

# Family Meals

## Easy, Tasty, and Healthy!

### SESSION OVERVIEW

This session is intended to help busy mothers plan, shop, and prepare healthy, low-cost meals for their families and learn ways to let their children help. Participants will discuss the difficulties of making easy and healthy family meals. Participants will share challenges of making low-cost meals and snacks. An educator will facilitate a discussion about solutions to the problems identified by the group by sharing ideas from participants as they play the *Make a Meal* game. Each participant will share how she would make a meal using two “make and serve in a hurry” foods that she has selected from items on display. The planned meals could be a snack, lunch, breakfast, or dinner. Ideas on making the planned meals low-cost will be shared. Participants will then brainstorm some ideas on how their children could help make the meal. Finally, each mother will be challenged to select two timesaving or low-cost ideas to plan, shop, or cook healthy meals that she will use in the upcoming week and one way she will let her child(ren) help her with the family meals.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** Mothers with children between the ages of 2 and 18

**GROUP SIZE:** 5 to 7 participants

**NEEDED TIME:** 45 minutes

### BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

After the session participants will be able to:

- Identify and use at least two timesaving or low-cost ways to prepare healthy family meals each week.
- Name two tasks their child can do to help make a family meal and commit to letting their child help do a task at least once a week.

### KEY MESSAGES:

- Timesaving tips can help mothers make easy, tasty, and healthy family meals, with less stress and cost.
- Children can help mothers get ready for, or make, family meals.

### MATERIALS NEEDED FOR SESSION

- Nametags/markers
- Highlighters or pencils (one per participant)
- Flipchart/markers
- Samples of “make and serve in a hurry” foods (See handout sheet, *Family Meals - Easy, Tasty, and Healthy!*) Hint: Arrange the items on a table for everyone to see.
- *MyPyramid* poster – Hang poster at eye level so everyone can see it.
- Handouts for mothers:
  - *Family Meals - Easy, Tasty, and Healthy!*
  - *The Healthy Family Guidebook*

### TIP:

Use empty boxes or cans for the canned and frozen items. Include examples of low-cost foods.

### Outline of 45-minute session:

- Welcome and introduction to *Family Meals – Easy, Tasty, and Healthy!* (5 minutes)
- Discussion group activities–How do you decide what to make for dinner? (10 minutes)
- Group activity–Play the *Make a Meal* game (25 minutes)
- Sum up and home activity–Identify ways to plan, shop, or cook fast and healthy meals and ways children can help (5 minutes)

The educator should review the information on the handout *Family Meals – Easy, Tasty, and Healthy!* and directions for playing the *Make a Meal* game. For additional background information, review “[Inside the Pyramid](#)” on the USDA website, [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). The section on “[Tips to help you eat](#)” for each of the food groups provides additional information to use in your discussion as time permits.

### WELCOME TO FAMILY MEALS–EASY, TASTY, AND HEALTHY!

Welcome participants and ask them to make their own nametag (first names only). Make sure each has a copy of the *Family Meals* handout, the *Guidebook*, and a highlighter or pencil. Add other points of interest, as needed, such as the location of restrooms and water fountains.

#### BEGIN:

What are the names and ages of your children? Give mothers time to share.

### DISCUSSION GROUP ACTIVITIES

#### BEGIN:

Tell the mothers the group will be talking about:

- Planning ahead to make meals easier, tastier, healthier, faster, and less expensive
- Shopping and buying low-cost foods to make and serve in a hurry
- Using timesaving tips when cooking meals
- Involving their children in making meals

#### THEN:

Read aloud the following from the [Introduction section](#) of the *Guidebook*.

Encourage mothers to follow in their booklets on page 3, as you read:

*“Mom, What are you making for supper? I did not like to hear that question. I often did not have an answer. Like most moms, I wanted my family to eat healthier foods. I knew I had to take action. With help from the Food Stamp nutrition educator, I learned that my family needed to eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. It still seemed hard to do. I needed a plan to change what we ate and how we ate. On top of that, my family is so busy. Work and school take up most of our time. Does this sound like you?”*

Pause and let the mothers think about the question, then:

#### ASK:

- How do you decide what to make for dinner?
- How do you make a quick meal?
- How do you make a healthy meal?
- Point to the *MyPyramid* poster and ask, What ideas does this poster give you?
- What are your favorite low-cost foods?

Allow mothers to share their responses for each question before moving to the next one. Using the appropriate responses from mothers:

#### POINT OUT:

- Healthy meals can be simple—Add vegetables to a favorite low-cost food like packaged macaroni and cheese.
- Cook when you have more time—On the weekend, make a double recipe of a casserole and freeze it for the next week.
- Do some tasks ahead—Wash and trim vegetables or make fruit salad a few hours or the day before your meal.
- Cook in a fast way—Microwave, broil, or stir-fry when you can.
- Make no-cook meals or snacks—Salads with low-cost foods like canned tuna, chicken, or beans; cold sandwiches; raw vegetables with low-fat yogurt or dip; or fruit. Note: Kids like finger foods!
- Use food stamps to stretch food dollars—Make a shopping list, check store sales, and buy generic or store brands.

#### PLAY THE GAME: MAKE A MEAL

- Have each mother pick two different foods from the “make and serve in a hurry” foods that are displayed on the table.
- After everyone has picked her foods, ask for a volunteer to tell how she would use her foods to make a snack or meal (breakfast, lunch, or dinner). They can add other foods to complete the meal.
- Ask how the participant would make the meal low-cost.
- Give everyone an opportunity to make a meal or snack. Write the menus on a flipchart or blackboard if available.

#### ASK:

- How can your children help make a meal? Let the group brainstorm some ideas. Write the ideas on the flipchart.





### SUM UP:

- Review the tips on the *Family Meals - Easy, Tasty, and Healthy!* handout.
- Refer to pages 29 and 30 in the *Guidebook* for more ideas on making low-cost, easy meals.
- Point to pictures of foods on the *MyPyramid* poster for ideas on healthy choices from each of the food groups. Mention that more information and easy menus are available in their *Guidebook* (pages 10-24).

### HOME ACTIVITY:

- Give each mother a highlighter or pencil and ask her to highlight or circle on the *Family Meals* handout or in the *Guidebook* (pages 29-30) two timesaving or low-cost tips she will try during the upcoming week.
- Ask each mother to highlight or circle on the handout one task she will let her child do to help make a meal during the week. Space is also available on the handout to write her own ideas.



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